

A N  
A D M O N I T I O N  
T O A  
D E I S T .

O C C A S I O N E D ,

By some Passages in Discourse with  
the same

P E R S O N .

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[ By W. Assheton. ]

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Be not deceived : Evil Communications Corrupt good  
Manners, 1 Cor. 15. 33.

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*Mala enim , & impia consuetudo est contra Deos dispen-*  
*tandi , sive ex animo it fit , sive simulate. Cicer. de*  
*Nat. Deor. Lib. 2.*

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L O N D O N ,

Printed by T. B. for Robert Clavel, at the Sign  
of the Peacock in St. Pauls Church-yard.

MDC LXXXV.

MEMORANDUM

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AN  
ADMONITION  
TO A  
DEIST.

SIR,

**I** Have just Cause even as a *Christian*, but much more as a *Church-man*, to express my Resentments against your late Discourse. Those Atheistical Harangues against the *Majesty of God and his Providence*, the *Immortality of the Soul*; *Rewards and Punishments in another World*; particularly, against the *Certainty and Eternity of Hell-Torments*; were doubtless to be rejected with the highest Indignation. And I am so far from condemning my self, as guilty of an unnecessary Zeal in so doing; that I rather judg it my Duty, to confirm and enlarge the *Admonitions* I then gave you.

A 2

I

I will not exasperate by a minute repetition of your extravagant Expressions (for indeed they are not fit to be repeated) but shall in Charity to your self, and others of your Complexion, desire you briefly to consider these two Things;

I. The Rudeness; II. The Danger of such Discourses.

From the former of these Topicks, let me advise you to *polish* your Conversation; and to behave your self, at least as a *Gentleman*, if not as a *Christian*. For pray consider; How ungentile it is, to disturb innocent mirth, and ingenious Society with such exasperating Digressions.

'Tis, you know, an unfortunate mistake to affront any Person in the presence of his Friend; and upon such intimation given (even out of respect to the Company) the most inveterate malice is usually silenc'd.

You will likewise acknowledg; That he must needs be a man of a very cold Constitution; who can sit tame and unconcern'd, whilst his *Prince*, his *Parent*, his *Patron* and *Benefactor* shall be reviled and aspersed.

not over words I will conclude. If



If the *King* shall be Libelled and reproached ; his *Person* ridiculed ; his *Title* disputed ; his *Government* traduced as tyrannical and unjust : An honest, Loyal Subject will not barely reprove such a railing *Shimei*, with a *Curse* not the *Lords Anointed* ; but according to his *Allegiance*, he will bring the *Rebel* to a sharper Account.

A Dutiful *Child* will, beyond all Patience, be provoked ; to hear his *Father* treated as a Villain and a Rascal. And a faithful *Servant*, on such occasion, will equally be moved for the Credit of his *Master*.

Now is God only friendless? Is no man think you concern'd, for the Honour and Glory of so great a Majesty? When blasphemous Mouths shall revile his Nature ; *Burlesque* his Laws ; *Despise* his Promises ; *Contemn* his Threatnings ; Laugh at his Terrors ; Do you think such Enlargment as this, can be wellcome or accepted in any Christian Society? If you fancy that it will, let me then convince you of your mistake, whilst I thus briefly inform you, what apprehensions we *Christians* have of Almighty God.

We do believe ; That there is one Supreme Being, not only infinitely *Great* and *Powerful*, but also infinitely *Good*, *Benign* and *Gracious*. That as He made all Things by his *Power*, so He governs them by his *Providence*. That He hath a more peculiar regard to his Creature *Man*, whom He hath endow'd with Perfections beyond other *Beings*. That He hath not only provided all suitable Accommodations for *this* Life (in which we continually depend on His care and bounty) but also hath made us capable of a *better*. That when we *Die*, we do not perish as the *Brutes*, but have *Souls* immortal, which shall never cease to be. That He hath provided a Happiness for these *Souls* (yea and our *Bodies* also, which shall rise again and be United to them) infinitely beyond our present apprehensions. That unspeakable joys are prepared for those that *love God*, *i. e.* that are obedient to his Commands. As for those who shall finally reject his Precepts, and stupidly follow their own brutish Inclinations, there is a sad *Eternity* that expects them in the other world.

But

But our comfort is, God made us to be happy ; and if we are not so, it is certainly our own Faults. For he shews us our Danger, and instructs us how to avoid it. He expostulates with us, *why we will Dye and Perish ?* and we may be confident, since God is Truth it self, he is very sincere in those Expostulations. And as the highest evidence of all this, He sent his Son into the World, not only to instruct us, and to be an example of Holy Life, but also to Dye for us, and to reconcile us to himself.

Now, he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all Things ?

In Sum. God is the most Indulgent Father ; the most bountiful Benefactor, and the surest Friend. He hath promised ( and he is able to do it ) to defend us in all Dangers ; to relieve us in all our Wants ; to direct us in all our Doubts. Finally, *He will guide us by his Counsel here :* and if we follow his Conduct, will at last bring us to his Glory.

Such Apprehensions as these all good Christians have of God. From whence, pray, do you judge, how unpleasant it must be to Persons thus perswaded, to hear such an excellent

excellent Being *despised*, so great a Majesty *prophaned*, and such infinite Goodness *abused*.

And therefore since men are impatient to hear that *contemn'd*, which they value and admire; or to be told that is *false*, which they firmly believe to be true; Do not turn Conversation into Brawls and Quarrels. At least be so modest, as not to affront the common Sense of Mankind. But if you will *not* worship God your self, yet at least be so civil as not to *laugh* at those that shall.

And that I may convince you, what little Cause there is to be so pleasant on such occasions; I must desire you further to consider, not only the *Rudeness*, but also

## II. The Danger of such Discourses.

And here I may rationally suppose: You have naturally so much Love for your self, that you dread the Thoughts of being *eternally* miserable. And I appeal to your own experience, if the serious apprehension even of the possibility of such Torments, like *Belshazzar's* Hand upon the Wall, hath not *loos'd your Joyns*; perplex your Thoughts, and damp't your Pleasures?

And

And therefore, since a mistake in this matter is like to prove so fatal, you ought to be well assured what you do, and upon what grounds you do proceed.

For it is not sufficient security in this case to affirm; *Perhaps there is no Life after this*; and 'tis probable there is no account to be given in another world; And you are not able to understand, how there should be such a Hell, such a place of Torments, &c. I say, this is not sufficient. But if you will proceed with Reason, you must then further demonstrate; That it is plainly impossible, and a flat contradiction that such things should be. Unless therefore you can prove this Proposition: *It is impossible there should be any future account: Any Torments in another World*, You do not act upon prudential Grounds, nor shew your self Master of such exalted Reason, as you commonly pretend to.

'Tis a known Rule, which all wise Men will observe, *Provide for the worst*. And therefore, though it should be granted to be highly improbable; or (as you are pleas'd to Phrase it) *a very unlikely matter*, that there should be a Hell, or a State of such dismal Torments, yet unless you

can further prove that it is utterly *impossible*; you are obliged in *prudence* to provide for the worst. Even to amend your life, and reform those practices which, if there be a *Hell*, will most certainly bring you thither.

I must confess you have a very difficult task, whilst you attempt to prove a *Negative*. But if you will be trying of your skill, I'll shew you the method in which you must proceed.

Whoever shall undertake so extravagant a design as to prove there is no Hell, He must *First* consider those Grounds and Reasons, upon which all good *Christians* do believe it, and he must *then* shew those Grounds to be *impossible*, and to imply a Contradiction; or else he trifles and deceives his own Soul.

Now if any one should ask me, Why I do believe a Hell? Did I ever see any of that Infernal Region? Did I ever converse with those damned Spirits? Did they ever tell me there is such a dismal Place? I Answer, No, But I therefore believe it, because God, who is *infallibly True*, hath plainly declared it. If it further shall be

Demanded:

Demanded ; How am I assured , That God hath thus Declared ?

I answer , Because the *Holy Scriptures* which contain the mind of God , and in which the *surest Notices* of another World are to be found ; I say These *Scriptures* do in plain Terms inform me , That there is such a *Hell* , Therefore I believe it.

And consequently ; whoever will pretend to prove it impossible ; That there is such a State of *Eternal Torments* , He must make good these following Propositions.

1<sup>st</sup>. That it is impossible that Almighty God should reveal his Will to Mankind. Or else,  
2<sup>dly</sup>. If the possibility of such Revelation shall be granted : He must then prove , That it is impossible , That these Books which we call the *Scriptures* should contain this Revelation of the Divine Will. Or

3<sup>dly</sup>. If both the former shall be acknowledged ; He must then prove it impossible , That such a Doctrine concerning the Eternity of *Hell-Torments* , should be revealed in Scripture. Or else,

4<sup>thly</sup>. He must make it appear , That what God hath thus revealed , cannot possibly be true.

As to the First ;

*Divine Revelation is so far from being impossible, that it hath the highest probabilities to support it.*

You have already granted, *There is a God.* And I am sure, upon consideration, you will further grant ; That God is a *rational intellectual Being ; a free Agent ;* having *Liberty* of choice to determine his own Actions. And consequently, what should then hinder, but that such a God may Communicate his designs and intentions to Mankind ?

Men you know do frequently discover ; not only what they resolve at *present*, but also their apprehensions *de futuro*, what they purpose to perform hereafter. And this faculty is acknowledg'd a great perfection in humane Nature, such as other Creatures are not capable of. Why then will you deny that capacity to so excellent a Being, as an infinite God, which yet you will grant to a limited and finite Creature ?

And



And this expostulation will appear the more rational, when I have further told you; That if you do deny the possibility of Divine Revelation, you have then the Suffrage of all the world against you. All Nations and all Religions, Jewish, Heathen, Mahometan as well as Christian, do acknowledge and suppose it.

If still you can doubt of so clear a Truth, (a) Tully in his Books de Divinatione, may then convince you. His Authority I shall not urge (for the Authority of God himself is rejected by you) but it is his Reason only I desire you to observe.

(a) Cicero.  
de Divina.  
L. 1. p. 296.  
Edit. du  
Puis, Lut.  
1565 Fol.

*Si sunt Dii, neque ante declarant hominibus quæ futura sunt: Aut non diligunt homines: Aut quid eventurum sit ignorant: Aut existimant nihil interesse hominum scire quid futurum sit: Aut non censent esse suæ Majestatis præsignificare hominibus quæ sunt futura: Aut ea ne ipsi quidem Dii significare possunt. At neque non diligunt nos: Sunt enim beneficii, generisque hominum amici: Neque ignorant ea quæ ab ipsis constituta & designata sunt: Neque nostra nihil interest scire ea, quæ eventura sunt: Erimus enim cautiore si sciemus: Neque hoc alienum ducunt Majestate suæ: Nihil est enim beneficentia præstantius;*

*fræstantius : Neque non possunt futura præoscere ; non igitur & sunt Dii , nec significant futura .*

Thus that excellent *Philosopher* argues, in the Person of a *Staick*. The sence of whose words, I shall thus faithfully give you in this following *Paraphrase*.

If there be a *God*, and yet this *God* doth not reveal his Will to Mankind ; If he hath made no discovery of a future State ; nor given us any notice of Rewards and Punishments in another World ; Then some of these following particulars must be asserted by us. Either: 1<sup>st</sup>. That *God* hath no Love nor Concern for Mankind ; or else 2<sup>dly</sup>. That *God* himself is ignorant of future Events ; Or 3<sup>dly</sup>. That *God* apprehends it will be of no advantage to us, to know what may possibly befall us ; Or else 4<sup>thly</sup>. That it is a Diminution of his State and Majesty , to Communicate his knowledge to Mankind : Or else Lastly ; If there be a future State , then that *God* himself is not able to declare it.

But none of these Things can be affirmed.

Not the *First* ; For *God* truly loves us,  
and

and is very indulgent and beneficial to Mankind. Nor 2<sup>dly</sup>. Can God be ignorant of future Events, because they are Appointed and Determined by him. Nor 3<sup>dly</sup>. Can it be pretended, that the notices of a future State will be of no advantage to us: Since this very apprehension that we must render an account of all our Actions, will make us more Cautious; not to live at random; but to take heed what we do. And therefore 4<sup>thly</sup>. It is far from being repugnant to the Majesty of God to reveal his Intentions; since nothing is more generous then bounty and doing good.

And Lastly, God is so far from being *unable* to declare future Events; that he could not be *God* unless he did *foreknow* them.

From these Premises, I may very suitably conclude with the same, TULLY. *Sunt autem Dii, significant ergo.* There is a God; Therefore He hath revealed his will to Mankind.

The Possibility of Divine Revelation, in These, being thus established; let us next examine, in Hypothesis, by what *Means* you can pretend to evince. Se-

Secondly ; That it is impossible ; That these Books we call the *Scriptures*, should contain this *Revelation of the Divine Will*. Or, That the *Doctrines* therein expressed should proceed from God ; should be dictated by his Spirit ; or Published by his Command.

Now there are but two ways, whereby the proof of such Impossibility can be attempted. Either 1<sup>st</sup>. It must appear, That the Contents of this Book are unworthy of such an excellent Author, and that the matters therein contained, are inconsistent with that due notion of God, which even natural Reason doth suggest ; or else, 2<sup>dly</sup>. That the Penmen of these *Scriptures*, were persons of such slender Reputation ; that we have no reason to believe them, though they tell us expressly they received this Book from God.

As to the former of these pretences ; *Tolle, Lege*. Take this Divine Book into your hand, but do it without prejudice. Read it with the same indifference, you would peruse any other Author, and then resolve me. What passage (either *Historical* or *Doctrinal*) can you find in this sacred

Sacred Volume, which doth in the least contradict; either the *Holiness, Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, Truth*, or any other of the Divine Attributes? If you affirm, that there is some such Passage, and that there are such contradictions, when you have first produced them, and told us what they are, I shall then, through divine Assistance, endeavour your Satisfaction.

As to the 2d. viz. *The credit of the Penmen*: The utmost that can be urged against their *Authority* is this, That there being many Cheats and Impostors in the World, 'tis the Character of true Wisdom, not to be over-credulous. And therefore though we read expressly in the Bible, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God: And Holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*: Yet this (saith the Deist) is but the Testimony of men in their own Cause: who are indeed to be admitted as very faithful Witnesses, if we may believe themselves and must take their own Words.

For the true State of the matter, according to his Sense, is this. The Writers of these Books to support their Credit, and to raise themselves a Name (as Mahomet from

his Pigeon, and Numa Pompilius from his Egeria) have counterfeited a Divine Commission, and delivered their Message in the name of the Lord. To which malicious Suggestion, I shall return this brief, and, yet I hope, full Reply.

The highest Evidence of divine Authority, is the Concurrence of Divine Power, i. e. The utmost assurance which can be given by any Person, that he Acts by a Divine Commission, and that the Message he delivers was received from God: it is the working of such Miracles, in confirmation of his Doctrine, as are beyond the Power of any natural Agent.

Now Jesus of Nazareth, the Author of the Christian Faith, most expressly assures us, that the Doctrines he deliver'd, were  
 Joh. 7. 16. *My Doctrine is not mine,*  
 12. 49. 50 *but his that sent me, I have not spoken of my self, but the Father that sent me, he gave me a Commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.*

And because it might seem unreasonable, to believe him, herein, upon his own word, he makes this plain Concession. *If*

I bear witness of my self, my witness is not true, *Joh. 5.31*  
*i.e.* If I only bear witness of my self, my witness  
 is not effective, or convincingly true. *There* *V. 32, 33*  
*is another that beareth witness of me: Ye sent un-* *34.*  
*to John, and he bare witness unto the Truth. But I*  
*receiue not Testimony from man, i. e. only from*  
*man. I haue greater witness than that of*  
**JOHN**: For the **WORKS** which the Father  
 hath given me to finish the same **WORKS** that  
 I do, bear Witness of me, that the Father hath  
 sent me. And when the Jews came round a-  
 bout him, and said unto him, How long dost  
 thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ,  
 tell us plainly. **JESUS** answered them, I told  
 you, and ye believed not: The **WORKS** that  
 I do in my Fathers Name, they bear Witness of  
 me.

What these Works are, the *Evangelists*  
 have largely Recorded. Some of them  
 are briefly repeated by our Lord himself, in  
 his Answer to *Johns* Disciples. --- The Blind  
 see, the Lame walk, the Deaf hear, the Dead  
 are raised. By such miraculous works  
 as these, our Blessed Saviour doth justi-  
 fie his Commission, that he was the  
**MESSIAS**, *i. e.* that he was that Person  
 who was sent from God; to Publish, to  
 3 C 2 Purchase,

Purchase, to Effect the Salvation of Mankind.

John 10.  
37.

These were the *Credentials* of this Heavenly *Agent* : The Divine Seal to his Commission, which made it *Authentick*. Which unless he had produced, he could not rationally have challenged any acceptance from the world. *If I do not the WORKS of my Father* (i. e. VVorks only imputable to Gods extraordinary Power) *Believe me not, If I had not done among them, the works which none other Man did, they* (the incredulous *Jews*). *had not had Sin* : i. e. had not been culpable for unbelief. Intimating plainly ; That if he had not confirmed his Doctrine with such convincing Miracles; they were not to be blamed, though they did reject him as an *Impostor*.

But still you will say ; The Question is *de facto* ; How can I be assured that such *Miracles* were really done by him ? Had I lived in those Days, and *seen* any of his Miracles, I should then have known how to have judged of them. But to tell *me* of things done 1600 Years ago, is not much to the purpose. There hath been *Jugling* and *Collusion* in other Cases, and



and for ought I know there hath been in this.

To satisfy which trifling Scruple, give me leave with some freedom thus to express my self. That if Men will turn perfect *Scepticks*; and causelessly suspect the truth of all such Passages, as they did not actually see done with their own *Eyes*, or hear with their own *Ears*, they are not worthy of Conviction. And if this be your temper, we must then turn you to *Grass*, and there leave you. But if there is such a thing as *fides historica*; or any assurance can be had of those *Transactions*, which are beyond and above our own Times; there may then be given as great evidence of these *Miracles*, as any matter of Fact is capable to admit. For *these things were not done in a Corner*; but plainly and openly, and in the sight of many *Witnesses*, and with such remarkable circumstances, as might best expose them to the strictest Examination.

To omit many others, pray read the Stories of (a) *Jairus's Daughter*; the (b) *Widow's Son of Nain*; and of (c) *Lazarus*. The last of which (*viz. Lazarus*) had

(a) *Lut. 8.*

(b) *Lut. 7.*

(c) *Joh. 11.*

had been Dead *four* days, and buried till he stank, and yet at the call of *Jesus* (although bound Hand and Foot with Grave-cloths) he came forth, all the Multitude beholding.

This last *Miracle* was so eminently convincing; and did so startle the *Chief-Priests* and *Pharisees*; that they called a Council upon it, and said; *What do we? for this Man doth many Miracles. If we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him.*

All this, saith the *Deist*, were evidently true, and must needs be granted, if we had not just cause to suspect your Proof. You tell us indeed that *Jesus* did such and such Miracles; particularly that he raised the Dead. But pray who are they that report these Things? were they not his own *Disciples* and Followers? And have we not great reason to suspect, they might forge these Stories for the Credit of their Master?

In answer to which *Cavil* (because *Objections* are endless) we shall put the matter upon this short Issue.

These Writers do tell us, That *Jesus* did not only raise others from the Dead;  
but

but also that he raised *himself*. Yea further they acquaint us ; That before he Died, he promised his *Apostles* that he would rise again : And moreover gave this also as a Sign to all the People , whereby they should know ; That his *Doctrine* was true , and that he was sent from God. If therefore I can evidently prove to you , That *Jesus* of Nazareth did rise again from the Dead, and consequently ; That the *Pen-men* of the *New-Testament* did herein declare nothing but Truth ; you will then have no reason to suspect their *Fidelity* in any other instance.

Now in order to your *Conviction* (which is most heartily pray'd for ) I must desire you to grant me this *Postulatum*, viz.

*That the Resurrection of Jesus is matter of Fact ; and consequently can no otherwise be proved, then as matters of Fact use to be.*

When we design to convince another that such a thing was done , the surest Evidence we can give him, is the *Testimony* of sufficient credible Witnesses who saw it done. And he who is not satisfied with such a Proof, we look upon him as a Person not fit to be discours'd with.

Now

Now there was never any matter of *Fact* better or more strongly attested, then the truth of this *Assertion*; That *Jesus rose from the Dead*. And that; whether we consider the *Nature* of the thing to be attested; or the *Number* and *Quality* of the *Witnesses* attesting.

*First*; The thing to be attested was of that *Nature*, that it might be fully perceived by those who saw it, *i. e.* it was an *Object* fit and proper to be judged of by their *Senses*.

As to the *Death* and *Passion* of *Jesus* (the necessary *Antecedents* of his *Resurrection*) they were plain objects of sense: Done in the presence of the whole City of *Jerusalem*, and consequently of his greatest *Adversaries*. That he truly died, all the world could testify. No Mans *Death* was ever more solemn or remarkable: Nor was this ever disputed. So that thus far we are fixt and certain; That if *Jesus* did rise again; his *Resurrection* was no *juggling Trick*, but a real *Miracle*.

After his *Resurrection* those to whom he appeared were frightned at it, supposing him to be a *Spirit*, but he sufficiently assures

lures them of the contrary by appealing to their Senses. Behold my hands and my feet, <sup>Luk. 24.</sup> that it is I my self. Handle me and see; for a Spirit bath not Flesh and Bones, <sup>39.</sup> as ye see we have. q.d. satisfy your selves, that it is I the same who was Dead, that am now alive again. But

Secondly, Not only the Nature of the Thing (of which even our Senses are competent Judges) but also the Witnesses attesting, do sufficiently prove, that Jesus is risen.

Now there are two things must concur to make a Credible Witness, Knowledge and Integrity. 1<sup>st</sup>. Knowledge. No Man ought to be received as a fit Witness in any matter, unless it do appear; that he had the opportunity fully to inform himself of the truth of that which he pretends to attest.

Should any Man affirm; that he saw a thing done, or heard a word spoken; and yet it shall be depose'd, by as credible Witnesses as himself, that he was at the same time Twenty Miles Distant; such Evidence, however confidently deliver'd, must needs be false and ridiculous.

Strong

D

But

But now the Disciples of our Lord had all imaginable advantages, to know the truth of what they Witness, whilst they affirm; That *Jesus is risen*.

They were his constant Followers and Attendants; and for the space of 3 Years, were the daily observers of his Conversation. And 'tis worthy your notice; That when by the Apostacy of Judas, they wanted one of their Number; they were very careful to choose such a one to succeed him, as had been a constant follower of Jesus, and had taken exact notice of every thing they were to Witness. Wherefore (saith St. PETER) of these Men which have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the Baptism of John unto that same day, that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a WITNESS WITH US OF HIS RESURRECTION.

Acts 1. 21.  
23.

Observe here how exact they were in their choice. They would admit of none, but one who had been with them from first to last, That could spake things (as we phrase it) not by hearsay only, but of his own knowledge. That if any Man should

should ask him : Did you your self see ? or did you your self hear this which you do report ? That he might then truly answer that he did ; and that what he Preached was upon his own certain knowledge.

Now the Disciples of our Lord were the constant Hearers of his Doctrine ; and amongst other Passages they heard him expressly declare ; That he would rise again the third Day. *Destroy this Temple,* Joh. 2.16, 21. *and in three Days I will raise it up. But he spake of the Temple of his Body.* And this expression of rising the third Day was so familiar and so often repeated ; that the Chief Priests and Pharisees took notice of it to Pilate, saying, Sir we remember that that *Deceiver said while he was yet alive, after three Days I will rise again,* Matth. 27. 63.

Moreover, the Disciples and Followers of our Lord were not only instructed in his Life-time, that he would rise again ; but they likewise saw him after he was risen : And that in such a manner, and with such Circumstances, as might most effectually command their Belief.

They *saw* him ; not only once or twice but several times. They *saw* him , not only *singly* and a part , and in lesser numbers ; but all of them, yea 500 of them at once ; and therefore though *one* or *two* might perhaps be mistaken ; yet so great a number could not possibly be imposed on.

Especially when we have consider'd further ; That they not only saw him, but had like wise all other imaginable Evidences to convince them.

For when he had *appeared* to them ; and discoursed with them ; which might also be done by a *Spirit* ; to give them a certain proof that he was no Spirit. *Handle me and see* (i. e. observe and satisfie your selves) *For a Spirit bath not Flesh and Bones as you see me have.* And least they might yet scruple ; that it was not the same *Jesus* that was crucified, but some other dead *Body* ; which being moved and actuated by an *Angel*, did take his shape and appear in his likeness : To remove this doubt ; *Behold* (saith he) *my Hands and my Feet, that it is I my self.* Those Hands and Feet which were pierced with Nails, and fastned



fastned to the accursed Tree. And if you will not believe your *Eyes* (which, according to the vulgar notion, may have a *mist* cast before them) then to satisfie your selves further; take the proof and satisfaction of another of your senses. *Handle me and see.* And when St. Thomas was a little more distrustful then the rest. *Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands, and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing.* *Jchn 20. 67.*

Now recollect the forementioned Passages, and then resolve me; what could have been further either said or done to convince them; that *Jesus was risen*? They *saw* him; he *discoursed* with them; did *eat* before them; they *toucht* him and *handled* him. And all this variety of Conversation they had with him, not only *once* or *twice*, but for the space of *forty* days together.

The *Premisses* considered, you must needs grant; That the *Apostles* were very sufficient *V*Vitneses of our *Blessed Saviour's* Resurrection in respect of their knowledge, i. e. They had all imaginable advantages, to know the truth of that which they witnessed and attested. But 2dly.

2dly. Supposing their *Knowledge*, and that they had sufficient means of information; yet whether were they Persons of that *Honesty* and *Integrity* as to be believed? Or was there not just reason to suspect, that they might deliver a falsehood instead of Truth?

And for this, let me desire you to consider that known Saying. *Nemo gratis malus est.* There is scarce any man so absurd, as to be a *Villain* for nothing; or so impertinently wicked, as to do mischief for mischief sake. VVhoever therefore shall presume, publicly and solemnly to deliver a false Testimony; he must be supposed to do it upon some urging Cause. As, to raise himself a Name: To please a Party: To advance his Fortunes: or To gratify a Revenge.

Now, All that is in the *World* (saith St. John) is the Lust of the flesh, the lust of the Eye, and the pride of Life. And whatever the Apostles could propose to themselves, it will be comprehended under one of these Three. *Honours, Riches or Pleasures.*

1. As to *Honour*; they could not expect it; since all kind of Dignities and Promotions were then in the hands of *Jews* or *Pagans*:

gans: from whom they received nothing but ignominy and reproach; and by whom they were accounted the *ding* of the earth, and the Off-Scouring of the World.

2. As to *Riches*; instead of gaining an Estate, they were forced to part with all that they had. Either by a *voluntary Resignation* to supply the wants of others (for at first, they had all things common) or else by the fraud and rapine of their Oppressors. They no sooner came to one City, but they were persecuted, and forc'd to fly unto another. And by this Ambulatory kind of life, without any fixt certain Being, they were so far from being able (had they otherwise designed it) to have raised Estates and Fortunes; that they lived upon the *Alms* and Charity of others.

And then 3dly. VVhat kind of *Pleasures* they were to expect: as their Master did foretell, so they themselves did sufficiently experience. *In the World ye shall have Tribulation. They shall lay their Hands on you, and persecute you, and ye shall be betrayed both by Parents and Brethren, and Kinsfolks and Friends, and some of you shall they cause to be put to Death, and ye shall be hated of all Men*  
for

*John 16.*

*33.*

*Luke 21.*

*12, 16, 17.*

*Joh. 16. 2.* for my Names sake, yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God Service.

St. Paul informs us, That God had set  
*1 Cor. 4. 9.* forth the Apostles as appointed unto death, and exposed them as Spectacles of Icorn and obloquy to the World. According to which it did in effect happen to them. Even to  
 11. this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; being reviled we bless; being persecuted we suffer it; being defamed we inreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and as the Off-scouring of all things unto this day. In short; If contumelies and reproaches; if Racks and Prisons; if Flames and Gibbets, with orther the most exquisite tormenting Deaths; if these be Pleasures, then indeed the Apostles and Followers of our Lord, who witnessed his Resurrection, had their share of Pleasures.

And now Sir, having seriously debated these Things, pray resolve me; What just Cause can be assigned? why Persons of sober rational Deportment (having the same Principle of Self-Preservation with other men) should, by publishing *Christs Resur-*  
*rection,*

rection, not only deprive themselves of all comfortable enjoyments; but also submit to the greatest Severities, and at last Death it self? I say, what cause can be assigned of such self-denyal, if they had not the highest *Convictions* of the Truth of what they Published?

But yet further. If the *Apostles* of our Lord were such Cheats and Impostors, why were they not discovered and exposed as such? If the *Resurrection* of JESUS was no better than a *Legendary Story* and a cunningly devised Fable, why was it not then confuted? The world at that time abounded with Learned Men both Jews and Heathens; who wanted neither Wit nor Malice for such an Undertaking. Why were not their Pens sharpened as well as their Swords? The Reason is evident. There were then such *Authentick Records* of these matters, as could not be disputed. The (a) True ACTA P I L A T I? (to which (b) *Justin Martyr*, and (c) *Tertullian* so successfully appealed) were then extant. And these were such irrefragable Proofs, that malice it self was not able to *bis*s against them.

(a) Euseb.  
Hist. Lib.  
1. c. 9.  
(b) Apol.  
2. p. 76.  
(c) Apol. c.  
5. p. 6. & c.  
21. p. 23.  
V. Euseb.  
H. Eccl. L.  
2. c. 2. p.  
40. V. Not.  
Valef.

There

There was indeed a very early, though ridiculous, attempt to stifle this Truth. The chief Priests and Pharisees having heard him say, while he was yet alive, *After three days, I will rise again*: They not only sealed up the Sepulchre; but also procured a Guard of Souldiers to watch it; that if any report were made of his Resurrection, they might then effectually *disprove* it by producing his Body, which for that end they had now got into their *own* Possession. But observe the *malice* of these Men; not to be convinced; no, not by a *Miracle*. For being told by the *Watch* (with the greatest Consternation) that an *Angel* had appeared; that the *Stone* was rolled away; and the *Body* was gone: They then hired these Souldiers to report; *That his Disciples came by Night and stole him away whilst they slept*. *VVhat!* All of them slept? No *Sentinel* to watch for the rest?

This was such an extravagant *Un-Soldier-like Allegation*; that nothing but the impudence of a *Jew*, could have imposed upon the world.

From these *Premisses*, I hope it hath been competently proved, 1<sup>st</sup>. That it is very possible,

possible, That God should Reveal his Will to Mankind. And 2dly. It is no less possible; That those Books we call the Scriptures should contain this Revelation of the Divine Will. And therefore 3dly; If (these Two Propositions being granted) You can still be so extravagant as to affirm; The impossibility of Eternal Torments; You must then prove it IMPOSSIBLE; That any such Doctrine, concerning the Existence or Eternity of Hell-Torments should be revealed in Scripture. Or else 4thly, you must prove; That what God hath revealed in Scripture cannot possibly be true.

As to this fourth Proposition; I should but trifle to expostulate it with you. Truth being such an Essential Attribute of God, that it never was disputed. If therefore God hath made this Revelation; there is a Hell, and the Torments of it are Eternal: Who art thou O vain Man that disputest against God? Let God be true, but every Man a Liar. And then the only Proposition for me to confirm, and you to disprove is this; It is very possible, that the Holy Scriptures do reveal this Doctrine. For if this be impossible; pray then inform us, what is the true sense

and meaning of these following VVords :

(a) Jude 6.

(a) The Angels which kept not their first Estate, but left their own Habitation, be hath re-

(b) 2 Pet. 1.7,8,9.

served in everlasting Chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great Day. (b) When the

Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ : VVho shall be punished with Everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power. (c) Marvel not at this : for

(c) Joh. 5. 28, 29.

the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the Resurrection of Life, & they that have done evil, unto the Resurre-

(d) Matth. 25. 41.

ction of Damnation. (d) Then shall he say unto them on the left Hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into Everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels, (e) And these shall go into Everla-

(e) Matth. 25. 46.

sting punishment : But the Righteous into Life Eternal. (f) At the end of the World, the An-

(f) Mat. 13. 49, 50.

gels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just ; and shall cast them into a Furnace of Fire ; there shall be wailing and gnash-

(g) Mark. 9. 43, 44.

ing of Teeth. (g) If thy Hand offend thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed,

then



then having two Hands, to go into Hell, into the Fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.

(h) Be not afraid of them That kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath Power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him. (h) Luke  
12, 4, 5.

And now Sir, having seriously perused these places of Scripture, pray resolve me, Are not these following Doctrines as plainly therein delivered, as any words can express them?

First. That wicked Men are liable to a further Punishment after Death. Those that kill the Body are not able to kill the Soul. But God is able to destroy both Body and Soul in HELL. i. e. (as St. Luke interprets St. Matthew) to cast them into Hell.

2dly. This punishment is very great and dreadful. 'Tis represented by Fire (the most smart and pungent Torment) and by *wailing and gnashing of Teeth*, out of anguish and despair.

3dly. These Torments are Eternal. Everlasting Punishments; Everlasting Fire: Never shall be quenched. Their worm dieth not.

There

There are indeed some impertinent *Criticisms*, urged by the *Socinians* and others, to *enervate* these *Texts*. But what then? Was there ever any *Truth* so certain, which hath not been disputed?

But what if these *Criticks* are mistaken? What if wiser Men than *they* have thought otherwise? Pray then do not hazard an *Eternal Concern* upon such *Niceties*.

I did once think to have expostulated these Things largely with you: And to have done it with all the warmth and vigour, that the Concern for a precious immortal Soul could dictate. But I must remember to whom I write. For unless your *Judgment* is rectified, the best things I can say, will be but matter for your sport. If the words of *God* shall still be *Burlesqued*, and *Ridiculed* by you; I have no reason to expect any great *Reverence* should be shewed to mine. But I hope better things, and things that Accompany Salvation, though I thus speak.

*God grant that you may in this your Day, consider the Things that belong to your Peace, before they be hid from your Eyes.*

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